

Treasures Out of Trash

BROADCAST DECEMBER 2

SCRIPTURE—JOHN 3:1-7

TEXT—*“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold”*—Psalm 68:13.

The story is told of an American in the South Seas visiting the Christian chief of a tribe of former cannibals. In the course of their conversation the American spoke scornfully of Christian missionaries and of the Christian Gospel. The chief replied, “I should think that you would believe in the Christian Gospel. If it were not for these missionaries and the Gospel, instead of being my guest for dinner you would be a part of the menu.”

There is a power in the Gospel of Christ which can change the greatest sinner into a saint. This statement has been demonstrated times without number, so as to need no argumentative proof. This proof is not to be found in debate but in experience. And yet it is evident in lives all about you.

Now this transforming power is not in mere words printed on a piece of paper. It is resident in the Christ Himself as revealed in His person, teachings, and work. Someone asked a Christian woman if she thought that death-bed repentance could cancel a lifetime of sin. She replied, “No, but Calvary does.” Or better still, what Jesus did for us on Calvary and in His resurrection.

This truth is suggested to us in the picturesque words of our text.

“Though ye have lien among the pots yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold” (Psalm 68:13). This is primarily a reference to God's benevolent designs for Israel. But it is suggestive of that which God designs for every person who will trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Our topic for discussion is “Treasures Out of Trash.” The psalmist in picturesque language portrays that which is useless or undesirable becoming an instrument of beauty and great value. So as we consider this let us note, first, the trash; second, the treasure; third, the transformation.

First, consider the trash. *“Though ye have lien among the pots . . .”* This is a picture of broken pottery or black, dirty, discolored vessels which are no longer useful or desirable. Thus they have been thrown on the rubbish heap.

The immediate meaning of these words is related to Israel. As bond slaves in Egypt, and later oppressed by various nations, truly she has “lien among the pots.” But under David she has come to a day of power and glory. Israel now has “the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

However, these words are suggestive of a far greater truth made possible by the Son of David, even Jesus Christ. And it is to this truth we would turn.

The phrase "lien among the pots" is suggestive of the spiritual condition of every man apart from a saving faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says that man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). He was created as a vessel designed for God's fellowship and service. But sin has broken the vessel and marred the image. Thus as a shattered pot, or one black and discolored, man lies on the rubbish heap, cast from the spiritual fellowship with God.

This is what theologians call the depravity of man. It does not mean that all men are equally evil or that there is not some good in all men. It means that because of his sinful nature and practice man is separated from God. He is lost from God and is in need of a Saviour.

It is at this point that you may fall into one of two fatal attitudes. In the first place, you may deny that you are a sinner, and, therefore, do not need a Saviour. The most difficult words for you to utter are the words "I have sinned." Instead you seek to reason around this awful truth. You seek refuge in philosophical, sociological, psychological, or biological explanations. You studiously avoid the word "sin," as in your pride you seek to justify yourself and your conduct. You compare yourself with the lives of other men rather than with the standard of God's righteousness.

But the Bible is quite plain in its avowal that you are a sinner. "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). Again, "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Rom. 3:12). The voice of God is clear when He says, "*But your iniquities have separated between you*

and your God . . ." (Isa. 59:2). And Paul adds, "*They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable . . .*" (Rom. 3:12). The word "unprofitable" means "garbage." As broken, besmirched vessels you are thrown on the rubbish heap of history. Truly you are "lien among the pots."

In the second place, you may become resigned to your sinful condition, and say that there is no hope for you. This latter attitude can be just as fatal as the former.

The first step toward a saving relation with God is to recognize that you are a sinner in need of salvation. The theological term for this is "conviction of sin." When you experience this, and recognize that you are unable to save yourself, you are not far from the kingdom of God. Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). Paul said, ". . . *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*" (I Tim. 1:15). The apostle had caught the spirit of the publican who prayed, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13). Literally, "the sinner," as though he were the only sinner in the world.

The nearer you are to God the more conscious you will be of your sin. And in repentant faith confessing your sin to God, you make possible God's forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin (I John 1:7).

Second, note the treasure. ". . . *ye shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*"

There is the story of a sculptor who said, "There's an angel in that stone. I must let him out." Someone commented that there is a saint in every sinner, and we must help Christ to let him out.

But more to the truth is a story

about Michelangelo. At the quarry he found a large piece of stone which had been cast aside because it had a flaw in it. But the master sculptor so carved it as to overrule the flaw, and out of it made his famous statue of David. So it is that our Lord, recognizing our flaws or sins, by His grace overcomes the sin to make of us a new creation of beauty and value.

God sees you as you are. But He also sees what, by His grace, you can become. And in that fact is your hope.

One of the most blessed truths of the Christian faith is the infinite worth which God sees in every individual. Unfortunately most of us do not so regard ourselves. We rate a man according to financial statistics, physical strength and skill, mental ability, or social graces.

And we sell ourselves for so little. Like Esau we sell our birthrights for a mess of pottage. A man sells his integrity for a few dollars. A woman barter her honor for a moment of pleasure. We reckon life in terms of temporal, surface values, or that which is so shallow. When all the time the real worth of each of us lies in the deep things of the soul.

Some years ago one of the richest oil men in the state of Texas died. He made his fortune by buying up leases on oil properties which had been pumped dry and abandoned. Then he drilled down to deeper levels and found pools of oil far richer than those nearer to the earth's surface.

It is thus that God sees you and me. If He valued us by that which men see in us, we could scarcely understand His redemptive work. But He looks beneath the surface to discover the treasure that only He can evaluate. Only thus can we understand Jesus' words, "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what*

shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

Suppose that you should gain the whole world, which is hardly likely. If in the transaction you lose your soul, Jesus says that you have made a bad bargain. Then should you realize it and want to regain your soul? Jesus says that you could not do so by paying all that you had gained for it. For the soul is spiritual. God is Spirit. And material values are no legal tender with God.

The treasure that God sees in you is best evaluated when you stand at Calvary. For there you see God in Christ giving His very life to redeem you. You are nothing more than rubbish as you lie among the pots. But God sees that which you may become. And He staked His all on His promise that through faith in His Son you may become a treasure indeed.

Third, consider the transformation "*Though ye have lien among the pots yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*"

Note the transformation from broken, besmirched pottery into the wings of a dove covered with silver and inlaid with gold. From something useless and ugly to something of artistic beauty and worth. Do you see the picture?

Now God does not say that He will merely repair or clean the outer surface of the pottery. He says that He will make it into something entirely new. This means not a mere reformation but a transformation.

Does not this suggest the Biblical teaching of the new birth? You may take the broken pieces of your life and try to put them together again. Or you may endeavor to clean and polish the outer appearance. But this is not what God is saying. Only He can make out of you something that did not exist before.

Paul had this in mind when he said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Furthermore, he said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15). God does not look on the outward appearance, but on the heart.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). And John comments, "Which were born, not of blood[s], nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). Literally, you are not a child of God by virtue of race, parentage, or self-will. It is a work of God, as by His Holy Spirit you are transformed through faith in Jesus Christ.

Would you be better than you are? What is more important, would you be that which you never have been nor will be by your own efforts? You can, if recognizing what you are, you will in repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus sub-

mit yourself to His redeeming, transforming power. For "though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

J. Wilbur Chapman used to tell of the conversion of Charlotte Elliott. She asked Caesar Milan how she could become a Christian. He replied, "My dear, it is very simple. You have but simply to come to Jesus." She objected, "But I am a very great sinner. Will He take me just as I am?" "Yes," was the reply, "He will take you just as you are, and no other way." Charlotte Elliott replied, "If He will take me just as I am, then I will come." Out of this experience she wrote that greatest of all hymns of Gospel invitation.

*"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to
Thee,*

O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

Will you come to Jesus right now, just as you are, that He might make you what He wants you to be!



"Admit you sold him the booze!"

See "Devil's Cup
January 27.

Check your paper
for time and
station.

THE ANSWER